

Six Kremlinologists Assess Latest Shift

The resignation last week of Soviet President Anastas Mikoyan has led to speculation in the West that a change in Soviet policy or a new balance of power among Soviet leaders might emerge.

Six leading authorities on Soviet affairs—professors at Columbia, Princeton and Harvard familiar with developments in the Kremlin in the past few years—all agreed in interviews last week that the assumption to the Presidency of Nikolai V. Podgorny was ~~perhaps as important as the~~ shift in power resulting in the ouster of Premier Nikita Khrushchev in October, 1964.

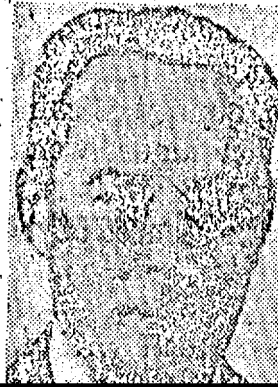
Most of them felt that Mr. Mikoyan had probably resigned for reasons of age and ill health. They agreed, too, that although conflicts of interest existed among the Soviet leaders, policy disputes were less severe and the struggle for personal power less intense than they ever had been.

The experts differed on the effect of the Mikoyan resignation on Soviet policy towards the West, some considering it a reflection of the trend towards a 'hard line' against American policy in Viet Nam.

Prof. Zbigniew Brezezinski, director of the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia, said the Mikoyan



Anastas Mikoyan, former president.



Alexander Shalepin, who was removed from certain government posts.



Nikolai Podgorny, the new president.



Pavel Kovanov, who replaced Mr. Shalepin.

resignation was "important. But only as important as (McGeorge) Bundy's resignation from the White House. It was simply a change in personnel — a bureaucratic change."

'NORMAL'

Cyril Black, professor of history at Princeton, said: "The Soviet leaders are in basic agreement. Though each of them represents different interests and different specialties — the military, agriculture, and so forth — their conflicts are kept within certain limits."

"We are so used to plots and counter-plots that no one will believe that the recent shift is a normal transition. It is not impossible that Mikoyan retired simply because he felt old and tired."

"There is no real evidence that he was ousted because he favored normalizing relations with the West. All of the Soviet leaders would like to do so — but they cannot because of Viet Nam. They feel closer to the French and the British than they do to us at the moment. When he was interviewed by Reston the other day, Kossygin naturally had to attack the U. S. He's worried about our escalation of the war, and he had to put on an act. But it's what he does that counts."

Prof. Merle Fainsod of Harvard said that he found little to comment upon in the Kremlin shift. "I take Mikoyan's statement at face value. I believe that he retired with honor. The key is Podgorny. If he gives up the party sec-

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